



The United States and NATO



A 2012 meeting of the NATO Military Committee with partners at NATO's Brussels headquarters. *NATO Images*

Formed in 1949 at the outset of the Cold War with the signing of the Washington Treaty, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) today is a security alliance of 28 North American and European countries. NATO's purpose is to safeguard signatory countries' freedom and security through political and military cooperation. NATO embodies the common democratic values that bind North America and Europe. Expansion of NATO since the end of the Cold War has advanced the vision of a Europe that is whole, free and at peace.

At the heart of the alliance is a promise of collective defense. Article 5 of the Washington Treaty stipulates that an attack against one ally is an attack against all. Article 4 ensures allies consult on security matters of common interest. NATO's first military operations, in Bosnia and Serbia, occurred in 1992, shortly after the end of the Cold War.

NEW STRATEGIC CONCEPT

In recent years NATO leaders have taken bold actions to make the alliance more effective, responsive and capable of addressing 21st-century threats. At the November 2010 Lisbon Summit,

NATO leaders adopted a Strategic Concept to prepare the member nations for new challenges and opportunities while also preserving its core mission as a security alliance. The Strategic Concept identifies "cooperative security" as one of NATO's three essential tasks. And it states that trans-Atlantic security is best assured through a wide network of partner relationships with countries and international organizations around the globe.

Reform of NATO's partnerships policy was launched at Lisbon, with a view to making dialogue and cooperation more inclusive, flexible, meaningful and

strategically oriented. A new partnerships policy was endorsed by NATO foreign ministers at their April 2011 Berlin meeting.

Over the past two decades, the alliance has developed a network of structured partnerships with countries from the Euro-Atlantic area, the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf region, as well as individual relationships with other partners. In addition, the new partnerships policy outlines mechanisms and activities, simplifying the way that NATO develops cooperation offers to partners.

NATO believes the complexity of today's peace-support and stabilization operations and the multifaceted nature of 21st-century security challenges call for a comprehensive approach that effectively combines political, civilian and military instruments.

The new partnerships policy sets these objectives for NATO's partner relations:

- Enhance Euro-Atlantic and international security, peace and stability.
- Promote regional security and cooperation.
- Facilitate mutually beneficial cooperation on issues of common interest, including international efforts to meet emerging security challenges.
- Prepare interested eligible nations for NATO membership.
- Promote democratic values and reforms.
- Enhance support for NATO-led operations and missions.



NATO defense ministers meet in 2012 at NATO's Brussels headquarters with representatives from nations that are providing support to the alliance's mission in Afghanistan. *NATO Images*

- Enhance awareness of security developments including through early warning, with a view to preventing crises.
- Build confidence and achieve better mutual understanding, including about NATO's role and activities, in particular through enhanced public diplomacy.

In the Euro-Atlantic area, the alliance engages in relations with nonmember countries through the 50-nation Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and the Partnership for Peace — a major program of bilateral cooperation with individual Euro-Atlantic partners. Among these partners, NATO has developed specific structures for its relationships with Russia, Ukraine and Georgia.

NATO is developing relations with the southern Mediterranean-rim countries through the Mediterranean Dialogue, as well as

with countries from the Gulf region through the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative.

In addition to these more-structured partnerships, NATO cooperates with a range of countries. They include Australia, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Pakistan, Iraq and Afghanistan.

NATO has developed close relations with the United Nations, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. And NATO is developing cooperation with a number of other international and nongovernmental organizations, including the African Union, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Organization for Migration, the World Bank and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.